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An Iowa Pioneer

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AN IOWA PIONEER.

THE ANNALS OF IOWA is the Hall of Fame for the illustrious men of the State and especially for those who have had a hand in the making of the Commonwealth and the insuring of its glory.

Of the pioneers of civilization within our borders few have contributed more largely to its diffusion, fewer still have identified themselves more intimately with the formation of the State, and no one of them all loved the institutions of our country more deeply, or had keener foresight of our splendid successes, than Samuel Charles Mazzuchelli—priest of the Order of Saint Dominic, or of the Friar Preachers, as they were known in the old world. A little niche in the Court of THE ANNALS is all that is available at this time—and to fit it the beautiful Memoir, written by one of his spiritual daughters of St. Clara's College, must be cut down and shorn of its literary graces to embody the name and deservings of this scholarly, heroic and patriotic priest.—REV. B. C. LENEHAN.

Father Mazzuchelli was born in Milan, Italy, on the 4th of Nov., 1807, of a family whose records were old when Barbarossa razed the city walls and passed the plow over its foundations.

The upper classes of the Italians are devoted to the Bible—and the trait is shown in the choice of the Scriptural name of Samuel for the babe when presented for baptism—to which was added Charles, in honor of St. Charles Borromeo, patron of the city on whose Feast Day he was born. Italian parents of the higher classes are exceedingly vigilant in their home training and this child never set foot in the city alone, but under his father's watchful eye competent tutors opened his mind to a vast store of information, broad, solid, and brilliant, upon the riches of which he drew in after days.

Proud of the virtues, talents and acquirements of his favorite son, the father planned for him a brilliant future, and it was a bitter disappointment to him, when his boy, at the tender age of sixteen, asked permission to enter the Dominican Order. He yielded, finally, to the grave and manly youth, his affections giving way to his judgment, and the boy entered the Monastery at Faenza, at the age of seventeen, and was afterwards sent to the Mother House of the Order, Santa Sabina, at Rome.

Bishop Fenwich, first Bishop of Cincinnati, a Dominican himself, visiting Santa Sabina, the home of his own youth, and seeking young missionaries for the far west, was attract-



Yours

Fr. Samuel Mazzuchelli O.S.A.

FATHER SAMUEL CHARLES MAZZUCHELLI,
Missionary Catholic Priest, architect and educator; founder of the St. Clara
College, at Sinsinawa Mound, Wisconsin.

ed by the handsome and cultured young monk, who was glowing with zeal and ambition to labor with him in the wilds of the New World. Permission was obtained from his Superior. Pope Leo XII gave him every encouragement, with his fatherly blessing, and after a brief visit to his family home, he set out for Paris, to meet the Bishop. Urgent business had summoned Bishop Fenwich to the United States, and he left the young zealot to make his weary voyage of six weeks across the stormy seas alone. Arriving at New York City, Nov. 1, 1829, he found a long journey of 800 miles before him and he knew not a single word of English; but, fortunately, he fell in with a generous-hearted American gentleman, with whom he traveled to Cincinnati, where awaited him the loving father—Bishop Fenwich, whose zeal had fired his own, and to whom was given his loyal devotion that lasted while he lived. He at once set to work to learn our language, an easy task for one so gifted, and after Christmas, was sent to the Dominican House of studies in Kentucky. On his way, he was thrown upon the hospitality of the learned French exile Bishop Flaget, of Bardstown, Ky., a soul to whom his own was kin. Ordained priest Sept. 5, 1830, he was sent to that part of the Cincinnati diocese which embraced Michigan and Wisconsin and fixed his home at Mackinac Island—the center of the great trading posts of the entire northwest. There were five priests besides him in Michigan but these labored in the southern portion, the northern peninsula he was to share alone with the traders and the savages. His work and success among the rude peoples from his arrival—until the year 1843—are set forth in his admirable book, "*Memorie Istoriche*," written to elicit help from his family and friends in Milan at his last visit home, in a manner uniquely his and inimitable. He never mentions his own name, nor uses the pronoun I throughout its pages, satisfying himself with the description—"The Missionary." It was no assumption of humility, merely a natural self-oblivion, made more admir-

able by his hearty and delighted admiration of the men who came after him and largely shared the credit of his devotion.

Especially does his generous love and reverence for the early missionaries of other Orders arouse us strongly, because it is by no means common even among the excellent men who have labored here most abundantly. But his sincere and straightforward mind rejoiced in every good by whomsoever done, and enforced the principle on all he taught. The nearest approach to fault-finding we discover in his book is when he blames the Whites for the vices of his beloved Indians, and assures us that those tribes furthest from them were purer, gentler, and more easily converted to Christianity. Their simple virtues, their homes, their family ties, their joys and sorrows are mentioned with as much respectful sympathy, as if they were his own kinsfolk. His boyish hope of laying down his life for the faith among the Indians, was disappointed; for he won the hearts of his savage people.

The only martyrdom that awaited him, was that which falls to the lot of every man who lives in advance of his age; who seeing afar, with clarified vision, the good that all may reach if they would but try, struggles to grasp it for them, only to meet cold misunderstanding and ingratitude in return. Cold, hunger, hardship, and the miseries of savage life were nothing to him, though long after he acknowledged, shamefacedly enough, that the struggle was long and bitter before he could bring himself to eat their filthy food.

Those who love his memory will find these little things worthy of note when they remember that he was small of stature, of extremely delicate physique, slender, agile, rapid in motion; and unlike the typical Italian, of a fair, bright complexion, with a color in his cheek like a girl's that never faded till the end of his life. In 1833 coming down the Mississippi, after a voyage up the Fox and down the Wisconsin, on his way to St. Louis to see some brother priest, he found at the Dubuque Lead Mines a number of his own

race, more in need of him than were the poor Indians. They begged him to abide with them. His Bishop gave consent, the General of his Order approved, and he at once began the series of labors that eclipsed all that he had hitherto achieved.

He was almost ubiquitous. He built in Dubuque St. Raphael's Church, an imposing structure for those days, from designs of his own, the facsimile almost of the ancient Church in St. Augustine, Florida, and labored on its walls, setting stone and spreading mortar with the men, hurrying it to a finish that he might keep with his fellow citizens therein the first public observance of the Fourth of July. In Galena, where he was building at the same time the first church, again after his own designs, he displayed his skill as architect and draughtsman in the fine old court house of Jo Daviess County, which stands to this day. At Davenport he secured for the church, from Antoine Le Claire, the splendid property they still enjoy, and built his combination school, church and house, and kept school himself for the children of the settlers. Among them was that most celebrated jurist of our day, Hon. John F. Dillon, of New York. Every river town was a field for similar work, and church and school rose together. Burlington, the first seat of Iowa territorial government, found him among the pioneers, in his little church, chaplain to the legislature gathered there, as he had been also to the territorial legislature of Wisconsin.

The State House was to be erected in the new capital, Iowa City. Father Mazzuchelli drew the plans for it, and laid off the streets of the new city. He used to laugh, in his own happy-hearted way, at the circumstance of his apparent claim upon two nationalities and two names—Irish and Italian. His own long musical name—Mazzuchelli—was often with western brevity made over into Kelley, and Matthew Kelley. The writer recalls one of the old Wisconsin converts, who used to boast pompously of "my dear old

friend Father Matthew Samuel Kelley," and much of his own work is said to have been inscribed to Father Kelley. This was matter of merry laughter to him: if good were done, it was of no importance to him, to whom it was accredited. Throughout Iowa, on the east, and as far west as the Iowa City line; in Wisconsin as far east as Green Bay, where the tablet to him in the old church was lately carelessly lost in the removal of the building and in Northern Illinois, churches and school houses rose under his hand, and memories are rich among the old people, of the devoted young Italian, who labored with them and for them so long and so lovingly. At least twenty churches, between St. Louis and St. Paul is the estimate of a brother priest who knew him well in the early days.

His mode of travel was by saddle, by canoe, and afoot, from mission to mission, school to school, from the house of sickness to the house of death; celebrating Mass, administering the sacraments, planning, working, planting, draughting, lecturing. With his radiant face, bright manner, and tender sympathy for every ill, and his love for little children, his kindly interest in every one, even the roughest and most uncouth of the mixed population of a new country, he pouring out the rich resources of his cultured mind, upon poor and rich, the illiterate and the educated, without distinction. All loved him and met him on common ground as is always the case when a great and richly dowered soul gives itself to others without thought of self. The trappers and miners and planters used to wonder how he made them forget to be hungry or tired, in their readiness and eagerness to carry out his purposes.

Higher education owns him as an apostle. Gen. George W. Jones had obtained a splendid tract of land in southwestern Wisconsin from the general government for his services in the Black Hawk war. Of this Sinsinawa Mound was a notable feature. Father Samuel came riding by and stayed as the General's guest. The artist soul of the

Dominican took in the commanding beauty of the spot, and he said to his host, "Science and religion alone are worthy of this noble hill." The owner was moved by his earnestness and agreed to sell it; the contract was closed.

Father Mazzuchelli started at once for Milan to secure the necessary funds. His own rich patrimony had been long since built into every church and school in the northwest and treasured in the hands of the Lord's poor. Returning speedily he built the noble old College of Sinsinawa Mound from which many distinguished men have gone out into the business and professional world, among whom is Ex-Senator Thomas A. Power, of Montana, and also many eminent and faithful clergymen. This institution he endowed; had it incorporated, and provided with a faculty of professors of which he was himself the first president. Before the war, it numbered among its students young men from New Orleans and from Mexico, so widely known was the remarkable man who founded it.

In 1847 he organized the Community of Dominican Sisters for the purpose of carrying on his numerous parish schools. The foundations were deeply and wisely laid, and to-day the admirable Order conducts the St. Clara College which the successor of Sinsinawa Mound College affiliated with the Catholic University for the higher education of young women, where noble buildings emphasize the romantic beauty of the landscape.

In the awful cholera year of 1850, the plague spread all over the southwestern section of Wisconsin, and his labors for the sufferers were commensurate with the ravages of the epidemic. He introduced the first scientific apparatus in the northwest, much of which is still in use, and his children of St. Clara preserve with devotion the electrical machine made by himself for the teaching of his first corps of teachers, and Father Samuel, as they loved to call him, rules St. Clara still. His mode of government, his free bright spirit, his large-minded patriotism, his love of freedom and devo-

tion to the Republic, all are there living and acting; the outgrowth of the seed he planted, the perpetuation of his own principle. During the memorable events of 1863 he endured an unusual strain; sick calls night and day almost without intermission through the straggling country parishes, over almost impassable roads, sapped his strength.

One bitter night he spent laboring from one death bed to another, and dawn overtook him creeping to his poor little cottage, no fire, no light, for he kept no servant, and benumbed and exhausted, he was glad to seek some rest. When morning came, unable to rise, they found him stricken with pneumonia, and in a few days his hardships were at an end forever. He who had served the dying in fever-haunted wigwags, in crowded pest houses, in the mines, and on the river, added this last sacrifice to the works of his devoted life. He died without the consolations of his brother priest, at four o'clock of the morning of February 23, 1864.

Of gentle birth and training, a plain, simple gentleman, a democrat, an American of the Americans, unused to toil or hardship, insatiable of work, irresistible in prosecution, of a capacity to lead men, to direct them, to rule them, he was ambitious to gain their love and confidence only to teach them the Gospel, to soften their manners, to mould their hearts, to improve their minds, to humanize, to civilize, to christianize them. He lived what he taught. He worked out what he believed, and he made us the inheritors of the treasures of his learning. May all Iowa men and women learn to love the memory of Father Mazzuchelli.

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